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ABSTRACT

A year-long teacher induction program was implemented in four inner-city parochial schools in the archdiocese of Chicago (Illinois). The program had three objectives: to provide new, first-year, and returning teachers with classroom organization and management techniques; to encourage the teachers to develop a support system for themselves; and to provide ongoing insight into classroom discipline. The participants were 20 teachers (15 first-year and 5 second-year) and 2 aides. Four meetings were held during the school year on topics relevant to the teachers' concerns: classroom management, parent conferences, teacher expectations, discipline, and homework. Midway through the first year, periodic observations were conducted by the researcher/facilitator for 4 months. Observation reports offered constructive criticism and positive reinforcement only, not evaluation. In final interviews with individual participants, it became apparent that frustrating aspects for the first-year teachers centered on discipline, pacing, flexibility, and organization. Second-year teachers still mentioned discipline, but added the areas of parent demands and expectations. According to the teachers' program evaluation surveys, the first two program objectives were fulfilled; the third, regarding discipline, proved to be the most difficult to control. Suggestions are offered for setting up such a program, and the teacher induction survey is appended. (JD)

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School Based / University Assisted Teacher Induction Model

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School Based / University Assisted
Teacher Induction Model

Educational researchers have referred to the period of transition for beginning teachers as a period of induction. The induction of new teachers into the profession has been a topic of discussion for many years; yet has only recently begun to be the topic of several educational journals and agencies (Brooks, 1987). A review of the literature identifies contributions from teacher educators, first year teachers, school administrators, and experienced teachers. These authors offer advice, recollections, personal opinion and descriptions of induction programs by means of surveys, experimental studies, qualitative research and program evaluation. Even with these available resources, there is little understanding of why beginning teachers have the experiences they do. New teachers continue to become discouraged in their chosen careers, and an average of 15% leave after their first year, with another 6% leaving after their second year (Schlecty & Vance, 1983). Although there are no significant statistics available, it is likely that the attrition rate for first and second year urban teachers is much higher. Induction programs are one way in which school districts including those in urban areas, can assist beginning

teachers to effectively make the transition to career teachers.

Results from a case study suggest that the development of a broad-based support system is an essential component for a teacher induction program for new and returning teachers in urban parochial schools (Bercik & Blair, 1989). According to the results, a successful teacher induction program model should be reactive to the teachers' needs and reflective of positive educational strategies. Because the present study involves a similar population, these recommendations were considered.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the needs of beginning teachers in an urban parochial school district while implementing a year-long teacher induction program that would provide new and returning teachers with an outside, impartial agency. Funds were obtained from a University Faculty Grant for materials and project development.

One goal of teacher induction is to offer instructional and interpersonal support, thus fostering both professional development and retention as a teacher. To pursue this goal, the emphasis during the implementation phase was on the local level. Because this program was an extension of a case study (Bercik & Blair, 1989), the number of schools, teachers, and

materials was expanded in the urban parochial school district. With this larger number of active participants, three objectives were identified:

1. To provide new, first year, and returning teachers with classroom organization and management techniques.
2. To encourage new, first year and returning teachers to develop a support system for themselves.
3. To provide ongoing insight in the area of classroom discipline.

Implementation

The program was implemented in four inner city west side parochial schools in the Archdiocese of Chicago. At OLL, five teachers began the program, including three in their second year of the program. At OLS, a total of five teachers participated, including two in their second year of the program and two aides. Two schools were new to the program: SM with six teachers; and STA with four teachers. The initial number of participants totaled twenty teachers and two aides. Five of this number were beginning their second year in the program. The aides were included in the project at their request, thus adding to their overall classroom participation. Active teacher participation throughout the program was exceptional, with the addition of at

least one of the principals attending all seminars.

Program Model

The initial meeting which set the tone for the remainder of the program, was held in August and involved all teachers and administrators. Its purpose was two fold: first, to acquaint the new, first year, and returning teachers with their coworkers and the members of each participating school in order to create additional support systems; and second, to involve the participants in the immediate needs of new teachers. Additionally, all participants were provided with a notebook that would become their resource guide for materials, sharing, and concerns throughout the year.

The researcher/facilitator defined her role as a resource person, an outside mentor, not as an evaluator. This aspect proved to be important as the year progressed, because as Frances Fuller (1969) contended, channels of communication are necessary if teachers are to overcome the fantasy stage.

Prior to each meeting a reminder was sent to the teachers relative to the meeting location, time, and topic for discussion. In this manner, teachers were able to bring their concerns about the topic and to keep its purpose in mind throughout the discussion.

A follow-up memo was sent after each meeting to clarify thoughts, list results of the group discussion, provide ongoing feedback to the participants, and to make additional suggestions.

Two weeks into the school year the second session was held with the teachers introducing themselves and naming their primary concerns according to grade level. Discussion centered on classroom management, which was chosen both by the teachers and the researcher/facilitator.

Because most schools have parent conferences in November, the third session centered on key areas relative to this topic. Discussion involved research about parent conferences, parent profiles, teacher expectations, parent expectations, and keys to effective communication.

The fourth session was an open agenda allowing teachers to share their thoughts and vent their frustrations, following with discussion on classroom management, discipline, and homework. One suggestion the teachers adopted was a chart on which they mapped the days, times, and students exhibiting erractic behavior. (see Appendix A) Using this observation tool, the teachers were able to clearly distinguish the strengths and weaknesses of their management system, to alleviate some

problems, and to employ a system of reflection about their classroom.

According to Ryan (1990), midway through their first year, beginning teachers pass from the survival stage into an apprenticeship process, and it was during this period that classroom observations began. For a four month period, the researcher/facilitator observed each teacher and immediately following the observation provided written feedback to both the teacher and the principal. The teacher used these comments as a springboard for improvement and the principal used them as a means to positive reinforcement. These reports dealt with constructive criticism and positive reinforcement only, not evaluation.

Each observational report was divided into two areas. The first centered on classroom atmosphere, room arrangement, class grouping, classroom control, bulletin boards, assignments, teacher/student rapport, and instructional focus. The second included suggestions on correct testing procedures, classroom charts, lesson plans, student practice sheets, demonstration materials, room decorations, and consistent reinforcement of teacher directions, i.e., five minutes equals five minutes.

Evaluations

Final interviews with individual participants were conducted at the conclusion of the year. (see Appendix B) These sessions were valuable because they gave insight into needs, concerns, and successes over the past year. Close examination of the questionnaire responses identifies specific similarities and differences between the majority of first year teachers and second year teachers.

The first year teachers described their most rewarding aspects in terms of their students' progress and growth, along with trust and acceptance. Those in the second year of the program discussed their own growth in terms of success, self-direction, and vocation clarification.

Frustrating aspects for the first year teachers centered on discipline, pacing, flexibility, and organization. Those in their second year still mentioned discipline, but added the areas of parent demands and expectations. As experience is gained, there appear to be more specific teacher concerns.

All participants agreed their prior experiences were important and worthwhile, stressing that during preservice preparation, quality school sites are a requisite.

The teachers responded positively that their methods courses were helpful especially reading/language arts and

special education but found actual experiences to be their best teacher.

In responding to question five, the first year teachers stated that their liberal arts courses were of little value. The teachers seemed to gain perspective, for one second year teacher summed up their responses by saying "They (courses) gave in their own way and I had to draw from them."

When asked how their college program could have better prepared them, the first year teachers recommended discussion on management and learning styles, teaching techniques, organizational needs (planning, pacing, paperwork), in addition to more methods courses and field experiences. The second year teachers were pleased but requested more field experiences and qualitative information on school law.

In responding to the question relative to the help of the principal, the first year teachers centered on problem situation support and idea sharing; whereas the second year teachers responded with the understanding and positive reinforcement aspects. In fact, one experienced teacher stated, "This is the year I sought her out."

Both groups felt that they were given support, had good advice, and received great ideas from their coworkers. They

viewed the researcher/facilitator as a resource and support person. The first year teachers accepted her as a curriculum planner and found the monthly meetings important, while the second year teachers valued the visits, and liked the idea of having a sounding board and safety net.

Questions ten through twelve dealt with ways to better assist the teachers. The first year teachers identified these needs: more principal support and observation, parent guidelines, and consistent school policies. The second year teachers appeared more content with their assistance, addressing only a need for smaller class size and continuous follow-through.

In discussing support from the staff, the first year teachers suggested more aides, availability of mentors and secretarial assistance. The second year teachers felt that communication was improving over the previous year.

Both the first and second year teachers agreed that the researcher/facilitator's role should include more visits and personal attention. Although meetings were held once a month and individual visits were conducted, teachers in both groups needed more support. Several stated that they realized too late that they should have made contact earlier.

The final question dealt with what could they suggest in the way of help for the future. The first year teachers were as varied as their number and stated the following: genuine welcome, positive feedback and workshops, supportive principal, more visits by principal and researcher/facilitator, and consistency. The second year teachers were succinct: friendly staff, clear school policy, and more guidance.

Conclusions

After analyzing the teacher responses, the researcher/facilitator regards the achievement of the three stated objectives as essential to the conclusion.

By providing teachers with a variety of classroom organization and management techniques throughout the year, the first objective was achieved. The first year teachers had a tendency to change techniques too rapidly causing them frustration, while the second year teachers discussed specific behavioral problems.

The second objective, to encourage new and first year teachers to develop a support system for themselves, proved to be successful. The monthly meetings provided the teachers with a forum to express themselves and to find out what others were thinking and experiencing. The results of the survey and

dialogue point to the importance of their support system. The teachers in both groups indicated the benefits they received via monthly meetings, staff contact, and visits. The teachers identified this support with these comments, "Gee, it's good to know that I'm not the only one having these problems." and "Last year I experienced the same thing, this is what I did." They felt free to share with one another and offer suggestions because they found problems in their schools to be similar.

The third objective, to provide insight in the area of classroom discipline, was the most difficult to control. Although the teachers received a variety of strategies, they often relented to their frustrations. This issue was visible with both groups' survey responses. As closer examination revealed, the teachers placed the discipline issue with the principal and the parents. They wanted more principal support and follow-through with parents.

Implications

To formulate a teacher induction program for new, first year, and returning teachers in an urban district, there are a number of suggestions to be considered:

First, a session at the beginning of the school year centering on classroom discipline and management techniques is

important to the new, first year, and returning teachers as well as to second year teachers because it acts as a reinforcement and solidifies the foundations they are building.

Second, regularly scheduled meetings throughout the school year should be held to discuss relevant issues as well as provide long term moral support. New teachers need continuous encouragement and positive reinforcement of their performance in the classroom. The idea that they should take charge and seek out information should be stressed. "It's OK to not be OK."

Third, classroom discipline is a continuous issue whether one is in the first, second, or twentieth year of teaching. Teachers need to understand and share with novices that each year may be different, but they need to remain consistent, flexible, and willing to discuss their problems. Only when problems are discussed can they be resolved.

Fourth, classroom visits should continue throughout the school year. The program facilitator should be viewed as a resource person for suggestions and comments rather than an evaluator. This is evidenced through the positive response received in questions nine, twelve, and thirteen. Teachers need the impartial person serving as a sounding board or a safety net.

A final comment from a second year teacher summarizes the benefits of her participation in the teacher induction program. "I am willing to express myself with other professionals and am able to accept suggestions. I know I'm an OK teacher, and next year I will be an even better one!"

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Appendix A

Tentative Problem Chart

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:30					
9:00					
9:30					
10:00					
10:30					
11:00					
11:30					
12:00					
12:30					
1:00					
1:30					
2:00					
2:30					
3:00					

Appendix B

Teacher Induction Survey

1. What were the most rewarding aspects of your last year as a teacher? Why?
2. What were the most frustrating aspects of your last year as a teacher? Why?
3. Thinking back to your student teaching and clinical (field) experiences, do you think they helped prepare you for teaching? How? If not, why not?
4. Do you feel your college education courses prepared you for teaching? If so, How? List courses that helped.
5. Do you feel your college education courses were of no value to you in teaching? Why?
6. How do you think your college/university could have better prepared you for teaching?
7. In what ways did your principal help you?
8. In what ways did your coworkers help you?
9. In what ways did I help you?
10. In what ways could your principal have better assisted you?
11. In what ways could the staff have better assisted you?
12. In what ways could I have better assisted you?
13. In what ways could we better help new/returning teachers?